

February 24, 2013

Board of Selectmen
Community Preservation Committee
Town of Acton
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Dear members of the board:

In preparation for your discussion and any possible vote about the future of the Morrison Farm barn on February 25, I hope that you have reviewed some documents that provide crucial background information for any decision that you make:

The **historic inventory form** for the farm (ACT.O) and the 2008 **MHC National Register Eligibility Opinion** explain the importance of the barn and the rest of the Forbes-Morrison farmstead throughout Acton's history, from the colonial era through the mid-20th century;

The **Community Preservation Act**, in its definitions of historic resources and "rehabilitation", states that a historic resource (like the barn, and in this case the entire farm) must be treated according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation;

The **Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines** warn against making radical changes to historic resources such as demolition of significant buildings or structures, or destruction of a property's historic character through extreme alteration or new construction.

I believe you have copies of all of these documents to refer to in preparing for your discussion. Put together, this information makes it clear that there are many aspects of the current Morrison Farm plan that would disqualify the project from CPA funding—not just for obvious actions like demolishing the barn or the ice house foundation, but also because of the impact the proposed new building would have on the farm as a whole.

Given all of the above, if the Morrison Farm project is to qualify for CPA funding, it *must not* include demolition of any significant historic resources—the barn, house, or even the ice house foundation.

Finally, please don't forget the positions taken by the Selectmen in 2010 following the submittal of the Kelleher Feasibility Study on the farm. Using the Kelleher report as a base, the board worked through a consensus-building process, ranking each of nine elements of the farm. The process culminated in the November 2010 charter document for the "blue ribbon" Morrison Farm Committee. For the barn, the Selectmen voted *unanimously* to "leave it as is and use it for equipment storage."

That was a wise decision. A storage use is often an effective strategy for preserving a historic resource. In most instances it is a kinder, and a less expensive, approach than adapting the building for public use, and the rehab. work involved is unquestionably eligible for CPA funds.

Other cities and towns in Massachusetts have adopted this approach, and the character of their communities is the richer for it today. For your inspiration, I am attaching a partial list of municipally-owned barns that have been preserved and rehabilitated across the commonwealth. Some have been upgraded to non-traditional uses, but many still perform their original functions of storage—agricultural and otherwise.

Sincerely,

Anne Forbes
25 Martin Street, Acton